United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council unanimously approves continuation of UNOSOM II, with revised mandate, but also authorizes reduction to force level of up to 22,000; expresses concern at reports of re-arming by Somali factions and condemns continuing violence; requests that timetable be considered for implementation of "Addis Ababa Agreements" by March 1995.

+ In Presidential statement last night, Security Council condemns Croatia for deploying elements of its Army and heavy military equipment in central and southern Bosnia and Herzegovina; calls for full withdrawal and states it would consider other serious measures if "interference" by Croatia continues.

+ World Food Programme warns that though it has adequate supplies to cover aid needs in former Yugoslavia, increasing numbers are in danger of starving because of obstruction of humanitarian aid convoys; Executive Director says commitments to allow access are not being honoured.

+ Olympic Truce, in observance of forthcoming Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway, goes into effect tomorrow, until 6 March; Truce, recognized by General Assembly resolution last year, calls for end to all hostilities for one month.

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The Security Council this afternoon approved the Secretary-General's recommendation for the continuation of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) with some revisions of its mandate. The Council went on, however, by unanimously adopting resolution 897 (1994), to authorize the gradual reduction of UNOSOM II to a force level of up to 22,000, while underlining the vital importance that it have the material means and military assets needed to enable it to discharge its responsibilities effectively and to defend its personnel.

Recognizing that the people of Somalia bore the ultimate responsibility for reconstructing their country, the Council also expressed concern at reports that Somali factions were re-arming and that a troop build-up was

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taking place in some regions. It condemned the continuing violence and in particular, the armed attacks against people engaged in humanitarian and peace-keeping efforts. The Council emphasize the crucial importance of disarmament by all parties in achieving lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

By the resolution, the Council approved the giving of priority to directing international reconstruction resources to those regions where security was being re-established and to local Somali institutions which were prepared to cooperate with the international community. It expressed appreciation to those Member States which had contributed troops or provided logistical or other assistance to UNOSOM II, and encouraged further contributions on an urgent basis.

The Council referred to the objective that UNOSOM II complete its mission by March 1995, and it called on the Secretary-General to consider, in consultation with the regional organizations and the Somali parties, establishing an agreed timetable for implementing the "Addis Ababa Agreements" by that date.

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In a Presidential statement last night, the Security Council strongly condemned Croatia for deploying elements of its Army along with heavy military equipment in the central and southern parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and stated that it would consider "other serious measures" if Croatia failed to put an immediate end to all forms of interference in Bosnia. Describing Croatia's actions as a "serious hostile act" against a Member State of the United Nations which constituted a violation of international law, the Charter and its own resolutions, the Council demanded full respect for the territorial integrity of Bosnia.

The Council also demanded that Croatia withdraw from Bosnia and Herzegovina all elements of the Croatian Army along with their military equipment. It requested the Secretary-General to monitor the situation closely and report to it within two weeks on progress towards that complete withdrawal.

The Council again condemned the acquisition of territory by force as well as the "practice of 'ethnic cleansing' by whomsoever committed", and reaffirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also called again for all the parties there to cease hostilities, to honour their commitments and to refrain from actions which escalate or widen the conflict. It called on them to negotiate in earnest within the framework of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia to achieve an early settlement.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) says that though it has received sufficient food pledges to cover aid needs in the former Yugoslavia till April, increasing numbers of people in the region are in danger of starving.

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The Programme warns in its latest situation report that the obstruction of humanitarian aid convoys is putting at risk those who are totally dependent on outside help. "The tragedy of Bosnia is that the commitment of all parties to allow unimpeded access for the delivery of aid has not been honoured," states WFP Executive Director Catherine Bertini.

Food distribution is currently averaging only 40 to 50 per cent of the minimum required and is becoming increasingly dependent on expensive airlift and airdrop operations, according to the report. Food shortages in parts of central Bosnia have made the residents as dependent on outside assistance as the refugees and displaced or institutionalised people for whom the food aid is targeted. As a result, desperate civilians have blocked routes and pulled food off convoys. When trucks do reach their destination, local officials have to distribute the reduced quantities to many more people than it was intended to feed.

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The Olympic Truce, in observance of the forthcoming Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway, goes into effect tomorrow, until 6 March. Following the tradition of ancient Greece, all conflicts should cease and all efforts should be made to search for lasting solutions, from the seventh day before the Games to the seventh day after they end. Last October, the General Assembly voted to commit the Member States to observe the Truce, declaring that it could usefully contribute to the realization of the goals of the United Nations Charter.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) said in a statement issued today that it was determined to try, despite the obstacles facing it, to promote observance of the Truce, in the hope that its action might serve to promote dialogue and reconciliation. "The Olympic Movement is an integral part of the international community, and consequently has a duty to take part in specific actions undertaken in the cause of peace and the well-being of humanity," the statement concluded.

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